

Government Orders

of here, the fact is that the war is a terrible mistake. The question before us now—

An hon. member: You know why it is.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. member deserves the courtesy of being heard and listened to.

Mr. Brewin: Madam Speaker, one would think in the seriousness of the issue before this House, that the minister could give all members an opportunity to put their views on the table.

• (1550)

I have not attacked the personal views of the members opposite. I have simply said that this war was a tragic mistake. That is a view which I say is shared by all Canadians. It is a view that I think causes us all to approach the issues in front of us, I would hope, with a sense of sombre contemplation.

The issue before us now is simply: What are we going to do with it? The war has started. It is a terrible and tragic war. The question now is: What can Canada's contribution be to bring this war to a swift conclusion? What can we do to prepare for the day when the war and hostilities end in the Middle East?

We have four basic positions to put to the House. I say, before I launch on the four points, that in our view the war is a mistake and wrong. This view we held before the war began and it is a view we hold now. We oppose this war and we oppose Canadian participation in the war.

The first thing the government and this House should consider is a peace initiative. Clearly Canada is not the centre of the universe. Canada, acting alone, cannot change history and cannot ensure peace. However, Canada is a respected member of the United Nations, has contacts throughout the world, and can begin to work with all other countries of the world which share the objective that this war must be brought to an end quickly to try to explore any possible avenues for peace.

The American generals tell us that last night's raid on Iraq and Kuwait devastated the Iraqi air force and Iraq's capacity to engage in offensive action. If that is correct, now is the time to take at least a brief pause and see if there is a possibility of getting a response from Saddam Hussein. It is clear that Saddam Hussein did not respond to the threat of war. It is a major miscalculation, I may

say, by the Government of the United States and the Government of Canada among others.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Government of Canada initially supported the build-up of troops because it believed mistakenly that that threat would cause Saddam Hussein to back away. The alternative response of preparing the world to accept long-run sanctions was really never given a chance as the governments of the world believed that the threat of force would have the desired effect on Saddam Hussein. That did not happen, and Iraq has now lived through 24 hours of bombing from the United States and the other countries in the region.

The time then comes to say whether the opportunity should be given to Iraq, perhaps through the agency of other Arab countries, perhaps through the agency of such countries as even Canada, to give some indication of the conditions under which it would withdraw from Kuwait and satisfy the objectives of the United Nations. That is the first initiative that should be taken.

Second, Canada must begin to prepare to provide humanitarian assistance to the victims of war in the region, to the victims of this crisis in the region. This humanitarian assistance may be required during the period of hostilities, or it may be required when hostilities are over. But the world is going to have to prepare for the eventuality of dealing with the victims of this war.

There are already migrant workers trapped in Iraq. There are refugees in Jordan. The people of the Horn of Africa are suffering a completely unrelated famine and because of the war, relief supplies are unable to get through. We have heard reports from various relief agencies that they simply cannot get the shipping through to bring relief to the starving millions of the Horn of Africa. It is the responsibility of this government and of the people of Canada, as well as other governments, to seek ways to get that relief through.

Third, it is important that we plan generally for the aftermath in the region. This war must end some day, hopefully sooner rather than later. The issue then becomes what happens? How will the area be governed? How will the area be policed? Clearly it is going to be important, in repairing the terrible damage in human, environmental and geopolitical terms that this war has created, to be able to have governments and other agencies move in quickly and in a planned way to provide the necessary relief and to begin to clean up the damage,